

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-1501**

December 11, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Majority Leader  
S-230, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Minority Leader  
H-204, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Minority Leader  
S-221, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Schumer:

For far too long, rural health care providers have been shortchanged by low Medicare reimbursements. Fair reimbursements are key to keeping rural health facilities open and serving patients, and we write in strong support of reforms that increase Medicare reimbursements for rural providers. Most urgently, we ask that you prioritize extending the physician work geographic practice cost index (GPCI) 1.0 floor before it expires on December 31, 2019.

Medicare's GPCIs are intended to adjust how physicians in different parts of the country are paid according to the labor and practice costs they face. GPCIs assign index values to each region based on a calculation of how expensive it is to practice medicine there. These values are then used to determine what health care providers in each region will be reimbursed for their health care services. Unfortunately, these index values are not currently calculated using the most recent and appropriate data on physician wages and practice expenses. This has meant Medicare has underestimated the costs of practicing medicine in rural America and underreimbursed our rural health care providers.

Rural health care is in a state of deep distress, and government should be making it easier – not harder – to attract more providers to rural America and keep our rural health facilities open. In recent years, we have seen countless rural health facilities close, including 119 rural hospitals since 2010.<sup>1</sup> We are facing a physician shortage that could climb to 122,000 providers by 2032.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "161 Rural Hospital Closures: January 2005 – Present (119 since 2010)," UNC: The Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, <https://www.shepscenter.unc.edu/programs-projects/rural-health/rural-hospital-closures/>.

<sup>2</sup> "New Findings Confirm Predictions on Physician Shortage," Association of American Medical Colleges, April 23, 2019, <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/press-releases/new-findings-confirm-predictions-physician-shortage>.

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Each day, it becomes increasingly urgent for Congress to work on bipartisan legislation that addresses these challenges.

That is why we support the *Keep Physicians Serving Patients Act of 2019*. This legislation would require use of the most recent and appropriate data available to determine the value of the physician work and practice expense GPCIs. It would also set a permanent minimum value for the GPCIs, ensuring no region's physician work or practice expense GPCI value would fall below 1.0. This would ensure that health care providers can always count on a predictable base when their reimbursements are being adjusted.

This predictable base is currently – but temporarily – in law for the physician work GPCI. Through the end of 2019, no region will have an index value below 1.0 when its reimbursements are adjusted to account for relative physician wage costs. While we support permanently extending this 1.0 GPCI floor, we also support any long-term extension of this provision that can be achieved before the end of the year. We want to make sure our providers who are already struggling with low reimbursements do not face cuts starting in 2020.

We respectfully request that you include at least a three-year extension of the physician work GPCI 1.0 floor as part of end-of-year legislation to be signed into law. We look forward to working with you on this extension and further reforms to ensure rural health care providers are adequately reimbursed to keep serving patients in rural America.

Sincerely,



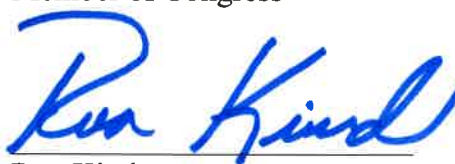
Abby Finkenauer  
Member of Congress



Adrian Smith  
Member of Congress



Darin LaHood  
Member of Congress



Ron Kind  
Member of Congress